

**CITY OF WHITE PLAINS
CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
CITY OF NEW ROCHELLE
CITY OF PEEKSKILL
CITY OF YONKERS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 20, 2012

CONTACT: **White Plains:** Karen Pasquale, (914) 422-1411, kpasquale@whiteplainsny.gov
 Mount Vernon: Shari Harris, (914) 665-2572, sharris@ci.mount-vernon.ny.us
 New Rochelle: Noam Bramson, (914) 654-2153, nbramson@newrochelleny.com
 Peekskill: Melanie Rener, (914) 242-0010, mrener@harrison-edwardspr.com
 Yonkers: Christina Gilmartin, (914) 512-4017, christina.gilmartin@yonkersny.gov

**MAYORS ROACH, BRAMSON, DAVIS, FOSTER & SPANO
SPEAK OUT AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE
Advocate for Specific Actions at Federal Level**

Westchester County's five city mayors joined forces today to voice their support for specific federal actions that will move us strongly toward ending gun violence in our communities.

White Plains Mayor Tom Roach, New Rochelle Mayor Noam Bramson, Mount Vernon Mayor Ernie Davis, Peekskill Mayor Mary Foster and Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano, all members of the Mayors Against Illegal Guns coalition, have stepped up and signed on to a letter to President Obama, Senate Majority Leader Reid and Speaker Boehner outlining concrete steps that they can take to end gun violence.

Specifically, the Mayors are asking our leadership in Washington to take the following actions:

- ✓ **Require every gun buyer to pass a criminal background check.** Today, 40% of gun sales in the U.S. go through without a background check under federal law. 62% of private gun sellers on the Internet agreed to sell a firearm to buyers who said they probably could not pass a background check. Background checks are the only systematic way to stop felons, domestic abusers and other dangerous people from buying firearms. These checks are instantaneous and highly effective.
- ✓ **Get high capacity rifles and ammunition magazines off our streets.** Military-style weapons with high-capacity magazines have no appropriate civilian or sporting function. They are designed to kill large numbers of people quickly – and they are also disproportionately used to kill law enforcement officers. We must review the assault weapons ban that expired in 2004 and pass a new law that is clear, enforceable and takes these weapons out of our communities.

- ✓ **Make gun trafficking a federal crime.** It may surprise you to learn that today, there is no clear and effective statute making gun trafficking a crime. Prosecutors must instead rely on a weak law prohibiting engaging in the business of selling guns without a federal license, which happens to carry the same punishment as trafficking chicken or livestock. The result is that gun trafficking is not prosecuted in a large number of cases. We need to change this and empower law enforcement to investigate and prosecute straw purchasers, gun traffickers and their criminal networks.

In Westchester County, we are fortunate to have a federal delegation that believes in and has advocated for such common sense changes to our gun laws. We thank them for their advocacy on our behalf and are now urging the rest of Congress and the President to make ending gun violence a priority in 2013.

White Plains Mayor Roach said, "It is past time for action. Continuing to do nothing is an affront to the victims of these tragedies and their families. We have an obligation – to them, to our families and to our country – to demand a plan."

New Rochelle Mayor Bramson said, "As we unite in grieving for the families of Newtown, so too must we unite in taking significant and permanent action to prevent such tragedies in the future. These common sense measures will greatly improve the safety of our communities and help ensure that firearms do not fall into the wrong hands."

Mount Vernon Mayor Davis said, "Offering condolences to families of victims, many of whom have yet to reach their prime, offers little consolation for lack of diligence to quell the proliferation of weapons ending up in the hands of those who care not for the consequences of their actions. We must take more aggressive action, emphasizing its importance by taking proactive measures to preserve life, sooner than later."

"We have seen a proliferation of these tragedies after the ban on assault weapons expired in 2004. We cannot allow this to continue. We demand that Congress take the actions necessary to help re-establish safety in our public places...schools, movie theaters, churches, parks" said Peekskill Mayor Foster.

"Recent tragic events have led to a long-needed wake-up call for us to take action," said Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano. "Violent gun attacks should not be a norm in our society and I am committed to working with other government leaders to ensure the safety of our community, not just now, but for our future generations."

The Mayors Against Illegal Guns coalition is a bipartisan coalition of more than 750 mayors – they are from cities big and small and represent every corner of the country. Like us here in Westchester, these mayors recognize that something has got to change. Together, we are committed to being a positive force for that change.